



Nearly 75 students participated in the Eastern Idaho Tournament of Innovation with the support of INL and the Center for Advanced Energy Studies.

Science fair sparks creativity in budding scientists, inventors

By Kortny Rolston, *INL Communications & Governmental Affairs*

How do you protect your mom from a pet cat that attacks at night? Is there a better way to remove steaming bowls from a microwave than pot holders? Which common household product best preserves fresh-cut Gerbera daisies?

A glow-in-the-dark collar. A bowl clamp. Diet Pepsi.

Those were just some of the problems budding scientists and inventors solved for the Eastern Idaho Tournament of Innovation. The event at the Center for Advanced Energy Studies (CAES) drew nearly 75 students from Twin Falls to Idaho Falls.

"We had really good participation and a good mix of projects," said Sunny Katseanes, the Museum of Idaho's education director and event organizer. "We had some really fun science experiments and inventions. The kids worked hard on their projects."

This is the second year the museum has organized the regional event with support from CAES, the Discovery Center of Idaho and Idaho National Laboratory.

Students are encouraged to invent a device to solve a problem or design an experiment and collect data as part of the scientific method.

"It's a way for kids to take the science they are learning in school and apply it to questions they have," Katseanes said. "When you pose a question and find an answer, you have to follow the steps of the scientific method. That's very valuable for them to learn."

Solving a problem is what prompted Parker Case, a third-grade student at Morningside Elementary School in Twin Falls, to enter. He invented a glow-in-the-dark collar for his cat that won't hurt the pet but also ensures his mom can see it.



Students in grades K-12 submitted entries for science projects or inventions.



Todd Allen, INL deputy director for science & technology, was one of the volunteer judges for the event.

Anne Seifert, INL's K-12 education director, said events like the Tournament of Innovation get kids excited about science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), which is why the lab supports them.

"Science fair projects promote problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, which are imperative in STEM fields," she said. "We want to pique students' interest in STEM subjects and encourage them to learn and apply the science and mathematics processes."

For a list of Tournament of Innovation winners, [click here](#).

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